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DEPARTMENT OF
LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE
CITY HALL
BALTIMORE, MD.

THIRD ANNUAL REPORT

MARYLAND STATE BOARD
—OF—
MOTION PICTURE CENSORS

1919

CHARLES E. HARPER
Chairman

C. I. T. GOULD
Vice-Chairman and Treasurer

M. E. HARRISON
Secretary

MARIE W. PRESSTMAN
Secretary

MARGARET E. MULLIN
Clerk

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OFFICES
204 EAST LEXINGTON STREET
BALTIMORE, MD.

Baltimore, Md., January 1, 1920.

To His Excellency

Emerson C. Harrington,

Governor of Maryland.

Sir:

Complying with law and custom, I herewith submit the Third Annual Report of the Board of Motion Picture Censors, of which I have the honor of being chairman.

The reports of the Secretary and Treasurer hereto appended gives in detail the complete operations of the Board for the year ending September 30, 1919.

The report discloses a small decrease in the number of reels censored and the amount of money received. This is due, no doubt, to the unsettled after-war conditions, and it is confidently expected that the volume of the business will soon return to normal.

The work of the Board has been conscientiously and painstakingly done; and the fact that Maryland censored prints are greatly in demand in the neighboring States where there is no legal censorship, is conclusive evidence of the value of the work done by the Board.

The purposes for which this Board was established, as conceived by yourself and others responsible for the Act, are, we believe, being faithfully executed.

The fundamental principle of safeguarding the morals of our people, and especially the children of the State, has never for a moment been lost sight of by the Board; and while the question of revenue is an important one, yet it is, after all, incidental to the main purpose of safeguarding the morals of inquisitive childhood. The returns from the Board in revenue to the State have been of a gratifying nature, a surplus amount of \$19,487.38 having been paid into the State Treasury after defraying all expenses of operating the office since its establishment in June, 1916.

The character of our work is such that it cannot be measured in dollars and cents, and its full fruits cannot accurately be gauged. Eternity alone can disclose the moral effects on the human mind and the items that contribute to a sound moral character.

I firmly believe that the work of our Board is contributing and will continue to contribute to the quality of our citizenship by establishing right principles of life and the approval of high ideals through the great educational medium of the motion picture.

This report for the year is made in the confident hope that the work of our Board will meet with the approval of your Excellency and the entire citizenship of our State.

Respectfully submitted,

CHARLES E. HARPER,

Chairman.

REPORT OF THE OPERATIONS OF THE MARYLAND STATE
BOARD OF CENSORS IN COMPLIANCE WITH
SECTION 9, ACT 1916, CH. 209

The following report of the Maryland State Board of Motion Picture Censors for the period from October 1, 1918, to September 30, 1919, shows a decrease in the number of films submitted for examination. A falling off in the volume of films "released" has been apparent during the past two years. Due to the demands of the trade, more expensive productions of five reels or more have taken the place of the numerous cheaper and shorter subjects formerly manufactured. In Maryland, as elsewhere, there has been little or no increase in the number of motion picture houses, but larger and more commodious theatres have supplanted, to a great extent, the original mushroom growth of small motion picture parlors. In general, a weekly or semi-weekly change of program has been adopted in place of the former "nightly" show. In addition to the general demand for "fewer and better" films, the great increase in the cost of production has further tended to induce manufacturers to curtail their output; while the importation of foreign film has practically ceased.

The Board during the year examined a total of 3,128 subjects, comprising 7,670 reels, as compared with 3,453 subjects, comprising 8,540 reels in 1918. Results of examinations show 2,638 subjects approved, 445 eliminated, and 45 rejected, as compared with 2,822 approved, 582 eliminated, and 49 rejected in 1918. These figures tend to disprove any assertion that the moral quality of the film on the market has improved in proportion with the artistic development and material progress so marked in the motion picture of the present day. The fact that so small a part of the country, to wit, about 20 per cent., is under legalized censorship of any kind is responsible for the lack of progress made in regulating the moral quality of the film "released."

The Board has made every effort to assist the manufacturers in reconstructing films whenever possible. The producers are beginning to recognize the standards of censorship, and special prints are deleted and reconstructed to be used in territories where legal censorship is in force. Many reconstructed prints have been presented to this Board in this way; therefore, the

number of condemnations and eliminations, as shown in the records of the Board, has been substantially decreased by the anticipation on the part of the film producers of adverse action by the Board. In such cases the Board requires that a statement accompany the application, giving a complete list of all such changes and substitutions, and an order is issued for the print as presented.

All films submitted for censorship are examined on the screen by one or more members of the Board. Rejected and eliminated films submitted on appeal are re-examined in the presence of the applicant by two or more members. Films which have been ordered eliminated or reconstructed are presented to the Board for final review before they are allowed on the screen, except in such cases where the eliminations are of a minor character, when a signed statement from the exchange is accepted as evidence that the order of the Board has been complied with. Many of the films included in the list of subjects "eliminated" were entirely reconstructed and passed only after the original themes had been changed. These reconstructions are not always entirely satisfactory as confusion in plot and lack of continuity in the story frequently result, but the letter of the law has been observed and the Board must therefore affix the seal of approval.

It has been found that the approval seal of the Board is readily detached and transferred to an uncensored print or film; therefore, for the protection of the exhibitor, and as a means of identification to the exchange, the Board has recently adopted the system of perforating all censored films with the State serial number.

A total of 45 films were found totally unfit for exhibition. Twenty of this number, after being revised, eliminated or reconstructed by the exchange or manufacturer, were finally passed by the Board. Among the principal reasons noted for rejection of films are the following:

Seduction and betrayal of young girls; marital infidelity and illicit love; prostitution and interiors of houses of ill fame; prolonged success of criminals and false glamour attached to criminal life; birth control and malpractice; over-passionate love scenes and indelicate sex situations; venereal disease, nefarious trade in habit-forming drugs; white slavery and underworld life.

Films are judged as a whole with a view to the total effect of the presentation. If a low moral tone is sustained throughout the film is rejected. In films depicting vice and crime it is generally required that "vice be made odious and virtue triumphant."

No appeals from the decisions of the Board were taken to court.

The Board, operating under the Budget System, has expended a total of \$11,389.44 for salaries, expenses and equipment, out of an appropriation totalling \$13,500.50, leaving a balance of \$2,111.06 which reverted to the State.

The total income of the Board for the same period from fees, fines and the sale of substitute seals amounted to \$14,884.00, as compared with \$16,723.50 for the previous year. A detailed statement of receipts and expenditures is attached to this report.

A total of \$160 was imposed in fines for violations of the law. A detailed statement of prosecutions for the year ending September 30, 1919, is attached, which shows a total of 13 prosecutions by the Board. In 11 cases fines were imposed and 2 cases were dismissed by the justice.

No appropriation has ever been allowed the Board for inspection purposes. The Board has, therefore, been obliged to rely upon volunteer inspectors, whose services have been exceedingly valuable in visiting motion picture parlors throughout the State and in reporting violations of the law.

In the Budget estimates for the years of 1921 and 1922 the Board has requested that provision be made for an adequate inspection system.

STATEMENT OF CASH RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS

For the Period October 1, 1918, to September 30, 1919

RECEIPTS

Appropriation—State of Maryland.....	\$11,789.82	
Fees—Original Reels (6,979).....	13,958.00	
Fees—Duplicate Reels (689).....	689.00	
Sale of Substitute Seals.....	102.00	
Fines	135.00	
		\$26,673.82

DISBURSEMENTS

Salaries and Wages.....	\$8,710.11	
Rent	600.00	
Fuel	81.18	
Gas and Electricity.....	277.85	
Office Supplies, Printing and Stationery.....	307.49	
Supplies and Repairs for Machine.....	76.92	
Telephone and Telegraph.....	101.68	
Excess Insurance Premium, Alterations and Repairs.....	264.15	
Film Seals.....	748.06	
Premium on Bonds.....	22.50	
Traveling Expenses.....	89.00	
Projection Machine for Examining Films.....	110.50	
State of Maryland—		
Fees, Sale of Substitute Seals and Fines.....	14,030.02	
Disbursements from Cash on Hand October 1, 1918—		
Sundries.....	96.27	
		25,515.73
Excess of Receipts over Disbursements.....		\$1,158.09
Balance in Bank October 1, 1918.....	\$3,177.02	
Cash on Hand October 1, 1918.....	214.99	
		3,392.01
Balance September 30, 1919.....		\$4,550.10
Made up as follows:		
Cash in Bank.....	\$4,431.38	
Cash on Hand.....	118.72	
		\$4,550.10

Maryland State Board of Motion Picture Censors,
204 East Lexington Street, Batimore, Md.

Gentlemen:

In conformity with your request, we have made an audit of the cash transaction of your Board from October 1, 1918, to September 30, 1919, and have found same to be correct.

We submit attached hereto classified statement showing the Cash Receipts and Disbursements of your Board for the period, showing a balance on hand September 30, 1919, of \$4,550.10.

Respectfully submitted,

WILLIAM A. GILLESPIE,
State Auditor.

A RECORD OF ALL EXAMINATIONS MADE BY THE MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF CENSORS OF MOTION PICTURES AS REQUIRED BY SECTION EIGHT OF THE ACT OF 1916, CHAPTER 209

Date	Number of Films Examined	Number Approved	Number Rejected	Number eliminated
1918				
October	177	155	5	17
November	206	179	1	26
December	231	184	3	44
1919				
January	256	209	6	41
February	256	211	5	40
March	297	243	9	45
April	269	220	6	43
May	235	197	2	36
June	305	254	1	50
July	303	267	2	34
August	290	254	1	35
September	303	255	4	34
Total	3,128	2,638	45	445

Statement of Prosecutions for Violations of Act 1916, Ch. 209, for Year Ending September 30, 1919

Title of Film	Where Exhibited	Nature of Offense	Date	Amount of Fine
Sic 'Em, Towser.....	Colonial Theatre, Hagerstown, Md.....	No Seal.....	1918 September 23.....	\$5.00
Wild Primrose.....	Victoria Theatre, .. Baltimore, Md.....	No Seal.....	1919 January 13.....	\$5.00
Love's Young Scream.....	Grand Theatre, Baltimore, Md.....	Not Censored.....	February 28.....	\$25.00
Peggy Mixes In.....	Parkway Theatre, Baltimore, Md.....	Not Censored.....	February 28.....	\$25.00
An Amazing Impostor.....	Blue Mouse, Baltimore, Md.....	Not Censored.....	March 6.....	\$25.00
Two Films (No titles).....	Auditorium Theatre, Salisbury, Md.....	No Seals.....	April 25.....	\$10.00
5 Rubbing It In.....	Garden Theatre, Baltimore, Md.....	Not Censored.....	July 25.....	\$25.00
Fifty-Fifty	Blue Mouse, Baltimore, Md.....	No Seal.....	July 26.....	\$5.00
Fifty-Fifty	Blue Mouse, Baltimore, Md.....	Eliminations Not Made.....	July 26.....	Dismissed.
The Other Man's Wife.....	McHenry Theatre, Baltimore, Md.....	No Seal.....	Dismissed.
Secret of the Storm Country.....	Plaza Theatre, Baltimore, Md.....	No Seal.....	July 31.....	\$5.00
Secret of the Storm Country.....	Plaza Theatre, Baltimore, Md.....	Eliminations Not Made.....	July 31.....	\$25.00
Trying to Get Along..	Aurora Theatre, Baltimore, Md.....	No Seal.....	September 5.....	\$5.00
Total \$160.00				

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73